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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Iran
- [1](#)2. Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Electronic media reported that the Security Cabinet has approved the release of 20 female Palestinian prisoners and detainees in exchange for proof that Gilad Shalit is alive. In a statement, PM Benjamin

Netanyahu's office said that it expects to receive a video showing the soldier is alive and well. The deal is to be carried out on Friday. Similar statements were given in Cairo and Gaza on Wednesday. The Shalit family was also updated on the recent developments in the affair.

All media reported that yesterday a London court rejected an appeal by pro-Palestinian organizations for the arrest of DM Ehud Barak, who is currently on a visit to Britain, for involvement in war crimes during Operation Cast Lead. Israel's Ambassador to the U.K. Ron Prosor was quoted as saying in an interview with Israel Radio that it had not been easy to convince the British authorities to grant diplomatic immunity to Barak, but that this is a temporary situation. Media quoted Barak as saying that he will neither flee nor apologize over Israel's war on terror. The media reported that many GOI officials and IDF officers might be affected by the Goldstone effect. Leading media reported that Barak is initiating a commission of inquiry into accusations that the IDF acted wrongly in the operation. Yediot and other media reported that the DM has suggested that former Chief Justice Aharon Barak head the commission.

Haaretz reported that the PA is urging the U.N. Human Rights Council to adopt the Goldstone Commission report in full and pass it on to the General Assembly for action. The report was formally presented to the council Tuesday. However, Haaretz reported that Israel and the U.S. are furious with the PA initiative and are seeking to recruit the EU to help foil it. Israel's diplomatic-security cabinet will meet Wednesday to discuss Jerusalem's response to the report. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe quoted FM Avigdor Lieberman as saying that the PA promotes legal suits instead of negotiations. The media reported that at Tuesday's council meeting in Geneva, Assistant Secretary of State Michael H. Posner criticized the report and rejected the suggestion that it be taken up by the Security Council. The Jerusalem Post reported that 32 U.S. Senators signed a letter to Secretary of States Hillary Clinton urging that the U.S. block any punitive measures against Israel at the U.N. on account of the Goldstone Report. Media quoted Prof. Uriel Reichman, president of the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya (IDC), saying yesterday that if Israel does not investigate the military operation in Gaza, it will be forced to do so by the international community. Professor Amnon Rubinstein of the IDC and a former Education Minister from Meretz voiced similar views in the media. Israel Radio quoted Israel's Ambassador to the U.K. Ron Prosor as writing an op-ed article in the British daily The Times: In the history of international organizations it is hard to conceive of an institution less fit for purpose than the absurdly titled U.N. Human Rights Council. Since its inception in 2006, the UNHRC has included such champions of liberal values as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Cuba. There is no doubting the comic value of such membership. Analogies spring to mind of Jack the Ripper leading a disciplinary inquiry at Scotland Yard, or Dr. Harold Shipman chairing a panel discussion on medical care for the elderly. Yet for Israel, on the receiving end of this surreal hypocrisy, it is no laughing matter. Prosor added: It is impossible to escape the obsession of the Human Rights Council with Israel. In three years, it has issued 25 resolutions against individual states: 20 of them targeted Israel.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Jessica Montell, the Director of the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, as saying that the U.N. Human Rights Council and the Goldstone Report are either biased or mistaken in some of their fundamental accusations against Israel. However, she added that Israel could have avoided such a report had it conducted a thorough investigation of Cast Lead itself, something that B'Tselem itself continues to urge on Israeli leaders.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the U.S. is looking for Iran to disclose details of its nuclear program, provide access to facilities and personnel, and otherwise take concrete steps to show it is serious about complying with international demands at Thursday's landmark meeting between the countries -- though American

officials characterized the parley as the beginning of a long process rather than a one-time occurrence.

HaQaretz quoted Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin, the head of IDF Intelligence, as saying that the IDF should adopt a "Code of Ethics for the War on Terror," because its existing ethical code is insufficient. Yadlin co-authored the proposed code along with Prof. Asa Kasher, the philosopher who drafted the army's first code of ethics in the mid-1990s. That code was later replaced by the current one, "The Spirit of the IDF," drafted by other philosophers. However, Yadlin argues, the current code does not sufficiently address one of the army's most pressing challenges: asymmetric warfare against terrorist organizations that operate amid a civilian population, such as the 2006 war against Hizbullah in Lebanon or January's Operation Cast Lead against Hamas in Gaza. IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi has yet to respond to Yadlin's proposal.

The Jerusalem Post, HaQaretz, and Yediot reported that PM Netanyahu finally agreed yesterday to a request by French President Nicolas Sarkozy to rebuild Gaza's Al-Quds Hospital, which was damaged during Operation Cast Lead. Netanyahu told Sarkozy by phone Tuesday that he had decided to approve the project as a humanitarian gesture. The Premier also said he wished to accommodate Paris due to the "strident stance that France has taken on Iran's nuclear program." The hospital is managed by the Red Crescent Society in Gaza. Sarkozy added that the initiative is a joint venture between France and Qatar, the wealthy Gulf sheikhdom that broke off relations with Israel during the Gaza war.

Maariv detailed a plan to build 14,000 housing units in the area of the Arab village of Wallajah in southeast Jerusalem that will be brought for approval to the Interior Ministry's District Planning Committee as well as to various municipal planning bodies. [HaQaretz reported on the plan on Friday.] This is the largest project in East Jerusalem since the construction of Pisgat Ze'ev, Gilo, and Har Homa. The new neighborhood, Givat Yael, is to encompass 3,000 dunams (around 740 acres), and is expected to have approximately 40,000 Jewish residents. The new neighborhood is expected to exceed Jerusalem's municipal borders and enter the area of Judea (southern West Bank). The area around Wallajah was recently purchased by a group of investors, which also formed a company called Givat Yael. The group is headed by Meir Davidson, who was once one of leaders of Ateret Cohanim, a group dedicated to settling Jews in Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem. The developers face two hurdles: the area is populated by many illegal Palestinian houses and has been declared a QgreenQ zone. Last February the District Planning Committee decided to reject the plan proposed by the Wallajah people to tear down the illegal houses. The battle over the houses has been going on for years and is funded by various American and European sources. Maariv reported that the international intervention concerning the village has sparked something of a storm in Jerusalem. The village's cause is being led by Meretz city council member Meir Margalit, who laments the "brutal takeover of the village's land and the abuse of its residents." Elisha Peleg of Likud, on the other hand, argues that "we must promote construction in all parts of Jerusalem. The European intervention is scandalous. The British Mandate is long over." In the course of the past week politicians leading the battle on behalf of the village claimed to have been offered a deal by the Givat Yael people -- the latter would be willing to keep the homes destined for demolition, in exchange for support on the municipal planning board. Yesterday Meir Davidson yesterday denied the existence of such a deal. The Jerusalem Post cited a brochure put out by Ateret Cohanim touting building in Jerusalem's Arab neighborhoods.

Citing the AP, HaQaretz reported that yesterday chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat played down expectations for U.S. President Barack Obama's latest attempt to restart peace talks, saying key differences with Israel make it difficult for negotiations to resume.

The media reported that an Israeli driver was moderately wounded last night when Palestinians opened fire on his car near the central West Bank outpost of Shvut Rachel, between Ramallah and Nablus. Also yesterday, Palestinians in Gaza fired two Qassam rockets at the western Negev.

Media cited difference between the intelligence services of Israel

and Germany on one side, and those of the U.S. regarding the proximity of Iran's acquisition of a nuclear weapon. Media cited Russia's call to pursue diplomatic contacts with Iran.

HaQaretz quoted the Kuwaiti Web site Al-Rai Al-Aam as saying that the U.S. is delaying the appointment of an ambassador in Damascus because of QmanipulationsQ by Syrian President Bashar Assad.

The media quoted a state commission of inquiry into the state's treatment of the evicted settlers from Gaza as saying that while evacuating every last settler took less than two weeks, the Qfamilies' rehabilitation has not finished to this day, more than four years after the evacuation -- and, even worse, it seems the end is not even visible on the horizon." This conclusion was part of an interim report that the commission, headed by former Supreme Court Justice Eliyahu Mazza, submitted yesterday to PM Netanyahu and other senior officials. The commission assigned Netanyahu personal responsibility for ensuring that the rehabilitation process finally ends. It praised Netanyahu for having pledged to do so, but stressed that this pledge was as yet unfulfilled. The commission placed responsibility for the situation on the successive governments and the settlers themselves, who the commission said did not extricate themselves from their predicament when they could. The Jerusalem Post quoted Likud Knesset Member Danny Danon as saying yesterday that he would have the report sent to Washington, to put out the message that Israel had learned the lesson of the 2005 disengagement -- that any similar withdrawals in the future would not be carried out at the QwhimQ of the U.S. administration.

HaQaretz (Akiva Eldar) pointed out a crisis between Jewish religious settlers in the West Bank region of Binyamin (north of Jerusalem) and their Christian Evangelist benefactors, who apparently broadcast missionary Christian content on their site www.frontlineisrael.com.

Maariv cited the claim of the influential Egyptian daily Al-Ahram that the Mossad thwarted the appointment of Egyptian Culture Minister Farouq Hosni to the post of secretary-general of UNESCO. Maariv quoted Israeli Foreign Ministry officials as saying that they knew that after their defeat, Hosni and Egypt would embark on a revenge campaign against Israel.

The media reported that, following consultations with DM Barak, the top brass, and Finance Minister Yuval Steinitz, PM Netanyahu has endorsed an additional 1.5 billion shekels (around \$375 million) for the defense budget, to be spread out over this year and next. The initiative has sparked criticism from politicians who advocate social causes, including Education Minister Gideon SaQar (Likud). Maariv quoted senior government officials as saying that an extra 4.8-billion shekel (around \$1.2-billion) budget cut will be necessary in 2010.

11. Iran:

Block Quotes:

"The Iranian Paradox"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz (9/30): QIn recent months, it seems Israel's preventive strategy is paying dividends. The Iranian regime has lost some of its strength following the rigged presidential election and subsequent repression of the opposition, while Obama has taken a tougher public stance against Iran. It is in Israel's interest to see both trends gain momentum -- Iran's weakening and America's determination. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's challenge in the coming months will be to withstand the burgeoning pressures to attack Iran, keep his composure, and not become frightened at his own speeches warning of a Qsecond Holocaust"Q while adhering to the preventive strategy. This is the most effective way, one that will give incentive to the West to rein in the Iranians without risking harm to Israel.

12. Mideast:

Block Quotes:

I. "Dead Man Walking"

Liberal columnist Gideon Samet, a former consul in Philadelphia, wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (9/30): QAfter all the attempts made by Barack Obama in the past weeks to revive the peace process, what remains is the clear recognition that this phrase has ended its convoluted lifetime. The respiration effort seems pathetic. The sour meeting by the leaders of Israel and the PA with the U.S. president can be recorded as the symbolic date of the end of the process, a burial ceremony for a protracted attempt that failed. It had some good times. But for quite some time, it has been a dead man walking.... In the past weeks, it has become clear with what ease an Israeli prime minister can succeed in thwarting an American initiative. It is not outstanding power of action that enabled Benjamin Netanyahu to undermine Obama's initiative, it is growing distaste on the Israeli street with talk about a peace process. And where there is no distaste, most Israelis exhibit complete indifference. Take an unwilling leader and a public that is fed up with the process and you will get something that even a charismatic U.S. president will fail in promoting. If there is a significant process, it is the shift of many Israelis rightward.... The next thing on the agenda will be talking about projects, diminishing the aspiration to a comprehensive solution. The next arena, the truly hot and action-filled one, is Iran, of course. The process has ended. There will be no demonstrations. Netanyahu has won.

II. "On the Right Path"

Legal commentator Boaz Okun, who was Director of Israel's Courts from 2004 to 2006, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (9/30): QThe mandate of an [independent Israeli] committee [to investigate Operation Cast Lead] is ... not clear, but it would appear it ... is dictated by the Goldstone report. In practice, the committee will have to examine all the events detailed in the Goldstone report, and take a stance on the question of whether the evidence it brings is sufficient to justify a criminal or other investigation in Israel. It should be noted that the Goldstone report aims high and casts responsibility on the planners of the operation, those who gave the orders, and the advisers who supervised the operation, not the foot soldiers in the field. Therefore, the committee will have to examine the cabinet's resolutions, the chief of staff's instructions, the orders given by senior commanders, and also the advice given by the legal advisers. The Defense Minister's attempt to restrict the committee's mandate will not succeed.

III. "Egypt, Stop the Rot"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (9/30): QVarious Israeli officials have privately been talking of late about a Qnew honeymoonQ period between Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.... Any such positive developments in bilateral relations, however, are being dismally outweighed by the negatives: Egypt, formally at peace with Israel for three decades, is at the forefront of Arab efforts to internationally discomfit Israel over the reported nuclear capability at the heart of this country's self-defense doctrine. A well-rewarded U.S. ally, Egypt has also failed to encourage the dramatic moves by other Arab states toward normalized ties with Israel that the Obama administration has been seeking en route to an Israeli-Palestinian peace breakthrough. And, perhaps most disturbingly, internally Egypt's media is intensifying its abiding hostility toward Israel, ensuring that our cold peace cannot be warmed.... Isn't that wider regression, emphatically encompassing the Egyptian media's viciously upgraded hostility to Israel, a decline Mubarak needs urgently address?

IV. "On the Sovereignty Watch"

Columnist Yoav Sorek wrote in the editorial of the nationalist,

Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe (9/30): QIsrael is coping with the issue of its continued control of Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank], but the Palestinian national movement is already ogling the Galilee. The demand for Arab autonomy in the Galilee is not a distant nightmare but almost a reality; the world's interest in Israeli Arabs is evidence of this. In its defense of its sovereignty and Jewish character, Israel must act forcefully against countries that hold contacts with the Higher Arab Monitoring Committee [in Israel], at least as long as the latter expresses a political agenda and not a municipal union that takes care of equality and social and economic conditions for the sector it represents.

CUNNINGHAM